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Prelim. Amdt. filed 12/05/2003

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REMARKS

This Preliminary Amendment presents the above claims for consideration and the information below for entry.

PENDING CLAIMS

Original Claims 1-16 were submitted in the present continuation application. Unrelated to any prior art, scope or rejection, appropriate Claims have been amended, added or deleted in order to adjust a clarity and/or focus of Applicant's claimed invention. That is, the changes in the claims are unrelated to any prior art or scope adjustment, and are simply clarified claims in which Applicant is interested. At entry of this paper, Claims 17-25 are pending in the application for consideration and examination.

CLAIMS FOR PRIORITY

Applicant has amended the specification to identify the prior US application upon which benefit is claimed in the present continuation case under §120. Further, Applicant also claims priority under §119 of JP 10-236792 filed 24 August 1998, the certified copy of which was submitted in prior application Serial No. 09/379,365.

Applicant respectfully requests acknowledgment of the completion of requirements for the claims for priority under §§119 and 120 in the present case.

IDENTIFICATION OF ASSIGNEE OF ENTIRE INTEREST

HITACHI, LTD. is Assignee of entire right, title and interest in and to the present continuation application by virtue of the Assignment filed in prior application

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et seq.

REQUEST FOR EXAMINER INTERVIEW PRIOR TO FIRST ACTION-RENEWED

Applicant filed a Request for Examiner Interview with the present continuation application on 28 August 2003. Currently, no contact has been received from the Examiner regarding Applicant's written request, and it appears that such Request has been overlooked. Applicant respectfully renews the request for Examiner Interview prior to mailing of a first Action on the merits in this case. The Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the local DC area number 703-312-6600 at the earliest convenience for the purpose of scheduling an Examiner Interview, and the Examiner is thanked in advance for such considerations. Contact also will be attempted by the undersigned to schedule an Examiner Interview. In the event that the present paper, in and of itself, is sufficient to place the application in condition for allowance, no Examiner Interview would be necessary.

EXAMINER INVITED TO TELEPHONE

The Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the local D.C. area telephone 703-312-6600, to discuss an Examiner's Amendment or other suggested action for accelerating prosecution and moving the present application to allowance.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully submits that the claims listed above as presently being under consideration in the

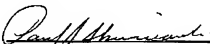
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application are in condition for allowance. Accordingly, early allowance of such claims is respectfully requested.

This Preliminary Amendment is submitted prior to the mailing of a first Office Action on the merits, and is therefore timely. Further, no additional claim fees are required for entry of this paper. Please charge any shortage in the fees to ATS&K Deposit Account No. 01-2135 (referencing Case No. 500.37490CX1).

Respectfully submitted,



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